



## Crime Prevention Research Center

*For a Safer America*

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I want to thank Representative Doug Dubitsky for inviting me to testify before your committee.

I am the president of the Crime Prevention Research Center, a group of academics who research a wide variety of crime and policing issues. Until January last year, I was the Senior Advisor for Research and Statistics in the Office of Justice Programs and then the Office of Legal Policy in the U.S. Department of Justice. Prior to that, I have held research or teaching positions at various academic institutions, including Yale University, the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, University of Chicago, Stanford University, and Rice University, and was the chief economist at the United States Sentencing Commission during 1988-1989.

### **Comments on SB 16 (“AN ACT ADDRESSING GUN VIOLENCE AND JUVENILE CRIME”)**

It’s already as if Connecticut is doing everything that it possibly can to ensure that lower-income individuals, disproportionately minorities, are unable to protect themselves.

Unfortunately, SB 16 will make this problem significantly worse. The bill proposes banning permitted concealed handguns on any bus, train, or ferry operated by a government entity. An April 29, 2021 report by the Connecticut Department of Transportation shows that 42.5% of people who use the rail system are minorities (Table 11, p. 18).<sup>1</sup> They are also clearly disproportionately the ones who use the bus system.

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<sup>1</sup> Connecticut Department of Transportation, “2021 CTDOT Service and Fare Equity Analysis Bureau of Public Transportation,” Connecticut Department of Transportation, April 29, 2021 ([https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DOT/documents/dpttransportation/SAFE-2021/Draft\\_CTDOT\\_Rail-and-Bus-SAFE\\_042921a.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DOT/documents/dpttransportation/SAFE-2021/Draft_CTDOT_Rail-and-Bus-SAFE_042921a.pdf))

In right-to-carry states nationwide, about 12% of permits are held by blacks -- close to their 13.4% share of the general population.<sup>2</sup> However, in Connecticut in 2020, blacks accounted for only about 6.3% of permit holders -- only about half of their 12.2% share of the state's population.<sup>3</sup>

There are some simple reasons for this. Connecticut's total fees for permits are higher than in any of the 43 right-to-carry states, and only Illinois and DC have longer training requirements. When you add all the licensing and training fees, the costs in Connecticut total about \$327 to \$380.

The high costs reduce the percentage of the adult population with permits, particularly the share of permits held by blacks. Now, SB 16 will make this disparity significantly worse.

If you ban people from carrying a permitted concealed handgun on buses or trains, you not only make it so that they can't protect themselves in those places, but you also disarm them on their way to and from the buses and trains. For people who use those modes of transportation, it makes impracticable for them to defend themselves.

If my research convinces me of anything, the people who are the most likely victims of violent crime are the ones who benefit the most from having the ability to protect themselves with a gun. My research finds that blacks and the poor who live in urban areas are the ones who get the greatest benefit from having permitted concealed handguns.

SB 16 also bans carrying in any municipal or state-building. But, again, that will not only disarm people in those buildings, but also as they go to or from those buildings.

There is no evidence that permit holders have committed any firearm-related crimes in any of those places where the legislation proposes establishing new gun-free zones. Connecticut doesn't release detailed permit revocation data, but for the states with such data, the revocation rate for firearm-related violations is in the hundredths or thousandths of one percentage point. Most of these revocations are for people who neglected to carry their concealed handgun permits or who accidentally entered a gun-free zone. Indeed, the revocation rate for firearms violations is so low that it is only about one-twelfth the rate that police officers are convicted of firearms-related crimes, and police are convicted at only about one-twentieth the rate of the general population.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> John R. Lott, Jr. and Rujun Wang, "Concealed Carry Permit Holders Across the United States: 2021," Social Science Research Network, October 6, 2021, Section VIII, pp. 44-47 ([https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3937627](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3937627)).

<sup>3</sup> FOIA request to the Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection Legal Affairs Unit 1111 Country Club Road Middletown, CT 06457.

<sup>4</sup> John R. Lott, Jr. and Rujun Wang, "Concealed Carry Permit Holders Across the United States: 2021," Social Science Research Network, October 6, 2021, Section VIII, pp. 44-47 ([https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3937627](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3937627)).

Gun-free zones make people into sitting ducks for mass shooters who want defenseless victims. It's no coincidence that, from 1950 through 2019, 94% of America's public mass shootings have occurred in areas where guns are prohibited to the general public.<sup>5</sup> In Europe, every mass shooting has happened in a gun-free zone.<sup>6</sup> It's as though these killers are aware that, according to police, permit holders have stopped dozens of would-be mass public shootings in recent years.<sup>7</sup>

Police are extremely important in the fight against crime, but they have a very difficult job in stopping mass public shootings. That's especially true because a police uniform is like a neon sign flashing: "I have a gun. Shoot me first." The killers know that they can freely target civilians as soon as an officer is out of the way. When you allow permitted concealed handguns in an area, it makes the officer's job safer because if the terrorist attacks him and reveals his position, he has to worry that there might be someone behind him or to the side or in front. It doesn't get much attention, but the police know of the cases where concealed handgun permit holders have come to their aid.

Those advocating gun-free zones argue that permit holders will accidentally shoot bystanders, but there is not one example of a permit holder stopping a mass public shooting where that has occurred.

The requirement that people show their permit on demand if asked by police, even if the police do not have reasonable suspicion of a crime, raises related concerns. Minorities are much more likely to face such demands to show their permits.

### Assault weapons ban

Over the five years between 2015 and 2019 there were three murders involving any type of rifle.<sup>8</sup> Given there were 472 murders committed during those years, rifles accounted for 0.6% of all murders. The FBI data doesn't break down murders by the type of rifle used, but even if any

<sup>5</sup> Crime Prevention Research Center, "UPDATED: Mass Public Shootings keep occurring in Gun-Free Zones: 94% of attacks since 1950," Crime Prevention Research Center, June 15, 2018 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2018/06/more-misleading-information-from-bloombergs-everytown-for-gun-safety-on-guns-analysis-of-recent-mass-shootings/>).

<sup>6</sup> John R. Lott, Jr., "Comparing the Global Rate of Mass Public Shootings to the U.S.'s Rate and Comparing Their Changes Over Time," Social Science Research Network, August 11, 2020 ([https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3671740](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3671740)). John R. Lott, Jr. and Carlisle E. Moody, "How the U.S. Compares to Other Countries in the Rate of Public Mass Shooters," Econ Journal Watch, March 2020 (<https://econjwatch.org/File+download/1146/LottMoodyMar2020.pdf?mimetype=pdf>).

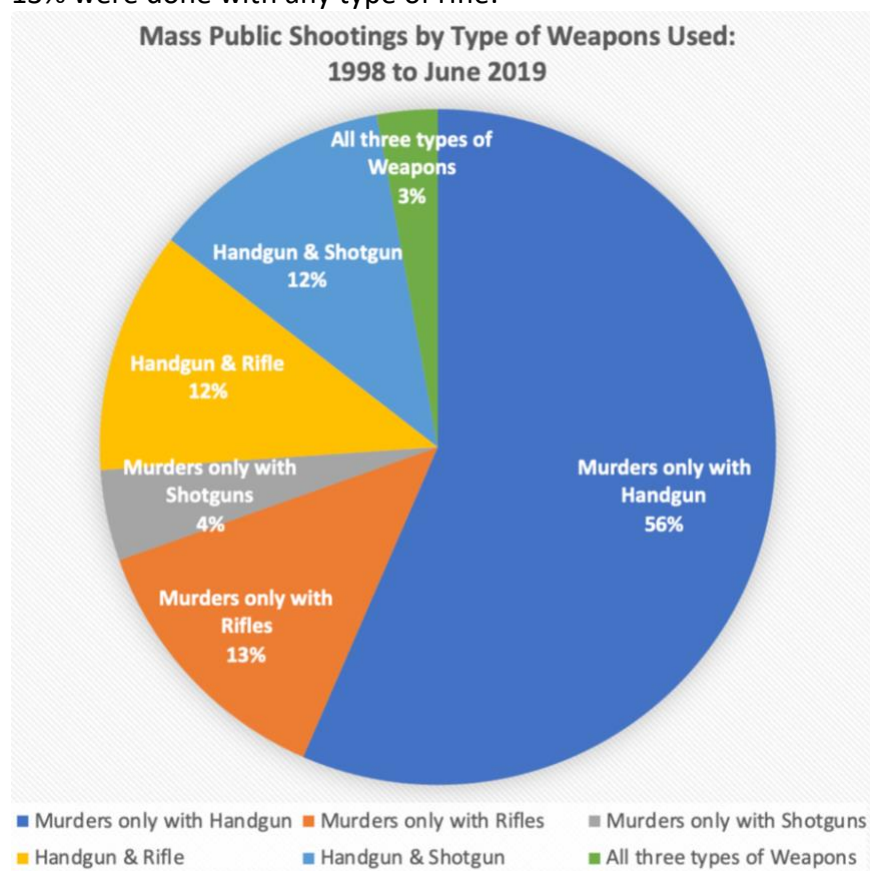
<sup>7</sup> Crime Prevention Research Center, "UPDATED: Compiling Cases where concealed handgun permit holders have stopped likely mass public shootings," Crime Prevention Research Center, April 2, 2021 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2021/04/uber-driver-in-chicago-stops-mass-public-shooting/>).

<sup>8</sup> Issues of "FBI Crime in the United States" from 2015 to 2019.

<https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2015/crime-in-the-u.s.-2015/tables/table-20>  
<https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/tables/table-12>  
<https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2017/crime-in-the-u.s.-2017/tables/table-20>  
<https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2018/crime-in-the-u.s.-2018/tables/table-20>  
<https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/table-20>

of these three murders involved so-called “assault weapons,” there is no evidence that any of those murders involved pre-ban (1994) semi-automatic rifles, weapons that the new bill proposes to ban.

For all of the emphasis on assault weapons, from 1998 to 2019 in the United States, 72% of mass public shootings where four or more people were murdered didn’t involve any rifles. Eighty-three percent of shootings involved handguns, 28% rifles, and 19% shotguns. In attacks where only one type of gun was used, 56% of attacks occurred only with handguns, and just 13% were done with any type of rifle.<sup>9</sup>

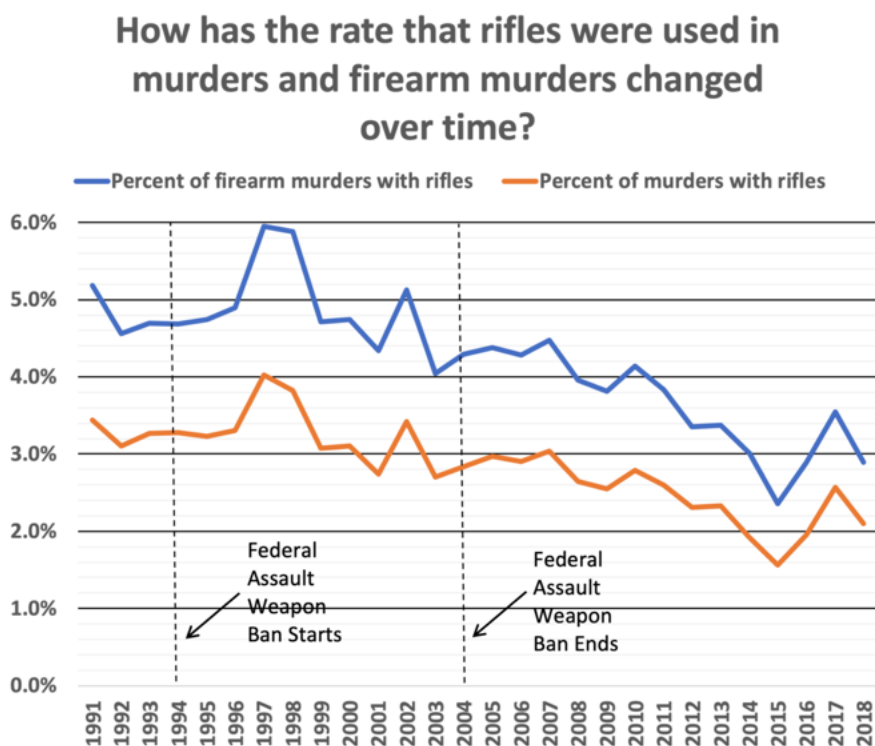


With all the concern about assault weapons since the federal ban sunset in 2004, it is interesting to see what a small share of murders are committed with any type of rifle and how even that share has fallen over time. The percentage of firearm murders with rifles was 4.8% prior to the ban starting in September 1994, 4.9% from 1995 to 2004 when the ban was in effect, and just 3.6% after that (3.9% if you look at just the first ten years after the ban ended).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Crime Prevention Research Center, “Breaking down Mass Public Shooting data from 1998 through June 2019: Info on weapons used; gun-free zones; racial, age, and gender demographics,” Crime Prevention Research Center, July 7, 2019 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2019/07/breaking-down-mass-public-shooting-data-from-1998-through-june-2019-info-on-weapons-used-gun-free-zones-racial-age-and-gender-demographics/>).

<sup>10</sup> The data is from the FBI UCR reports (<https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s>). Crime Prevention Research Center, “With all the concern about assault weapons, how has the share of murders with rifles changed over time?” Crime Prevention Research Center, November 4, 2019 (<https://crimeresearch.org/2019/11/with-all-the-concern-about-assault-weapons-how-has-the-share-of-murders-with-rifles-changed-over-time/>).

The average rate of firearm murders committed with rifles after the assault weapons ban was statistically significantly less than the rate during the ban at the 0.0001 percent level for a two-tailed t-test. There was no statistically significant difference in rates for the period before the ban with the assault weapon ban period.



Nor have the deadliest mass public shootings involved assault weapons with large capacity magazine. The deadliest attacks have involved cases where multiple types of firearms were used.<sup>11</sup>

If assault weapons bans were effective, they should have caused the number of attacks with assault weapons to have declined relative to attacks committed using other types of firearms. Testing for this seems to be the best way of evaluating the effectiveness of the ban.

Regardless of which of the datasets or definitions we use, none of the results are consistent with what gun control advocates would predict. The share of attacks involving assault weapons did not reach its lowest point during the federal assault weapons ban. Using the Mother Jones dataset, the ten years after the end of the assault weapons ban (September 2004 to August 2014) saw the lowest share of shootings involving assault weapons. The CPRC data with the

<sup>11</sup> John R. Lott, Jr., *The War on Guns*, Regnery Publishing: Washington DC, 2016, chapter 10 (<https://www.amazon.com/War-Guns-Yourself-Against-Control/dp/1621575802/>). John R. Lott, Jr., *Gun Control Myths*, 2020, chapter 3 (<https://www.amazon.com/Gun-Control-Myths-politicians-botched/dp/B08C95PD1K/>).

traditional breakdown of 4 or more people murdered shows assault weapons making up even a slightly higher share of shootings during the federal ban.

Finally, as to the concern about ghost guns, it is already a felony punishable by five years in prison to privately transfer a gun without a serial number on it.

### **HB 5416 (“An Act Concerning the Bulk Purchases of Pistols and Revolvers”)**

The problem with most gun control laws is that they focus on how criminals have previously obtained guns and not that there are many close substitute sources for them to obtain them. The point is simple — criminals have guns and they get them illegally, primarily from drug dealers. It is just as difficult to stop criminals from obtaining guns to stop drug dealers from obtaining illegal drugs.

Even if all sources for obtaining semiautomatic firearms with various features such as a pistol grip, telescoping stock, and/or high-capacity magazines were closed off within the state of Connecticut, it is unlikely that such laws would stop the vast majority of criminals from acquiring these guns. Take Mexico, where there has been only one-gun store in the country since 1972 in Mexico City; and where only about 0.1% of Mexican adults have licenses to legally own guns, with the most powerful legally owned firearms are .22SR caliber rifles, hardly the type of weapon used by criminals. It is a felony to make any private transfer of guns between civilians, and all gun sales must be made through this one store. Despite that, in 2019, Mexico had a murder rate that is about six times the U.S. rate.<sup>12</sup>

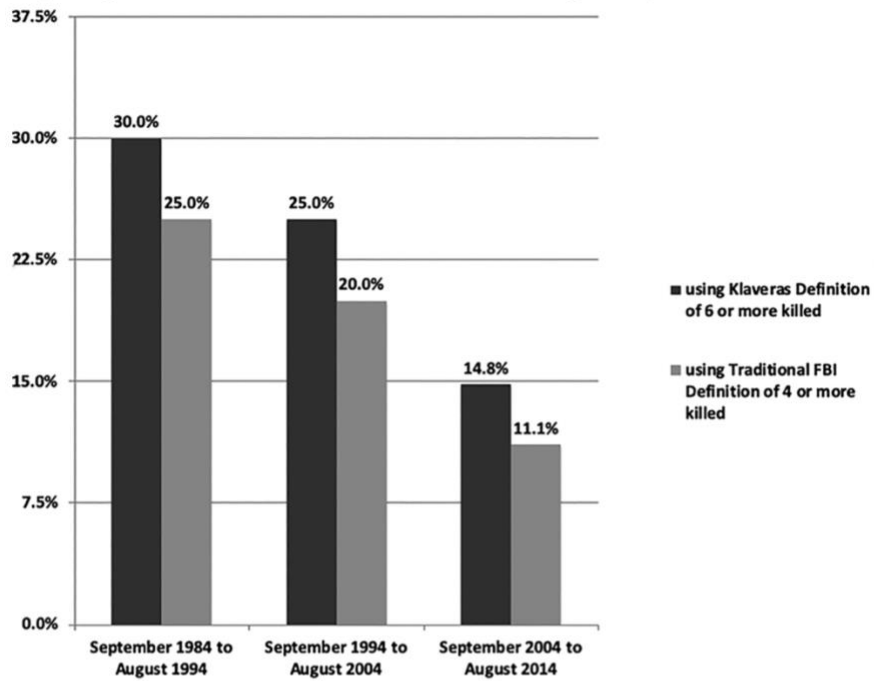
Empirical research shows that one-gun-a-month regulations do nothing to stop gun crime in the state that such laws are passed or in neighboring states.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Associated Press, “Mexico sets 1st half murder record, up 5.3%,” July 22, 2019 (<https://www.apnews.com/c197a3ee34834ea69f745975fa632ea2>). Compare these numbers to the FBI Uniform Crime Report for 2019 (<https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/topic-pages/tables/table-1>).

<sup>13</sup> John R. Lott, Jr., “More Guns, Less Crime,” University of Chicago Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2010, pp. 193, 198-202.

**Percent of Mass Public Shootings with Assault Weapons**  
**(Using Mother Jones' Mass Public Shooting data)**



**Percent of Mass Public Shootings with Assault Weapons**  
**(Using CPRC Mass Public Shooting data)**

